



Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

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AGENDA DATE: October 3, 2007

TO: Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

FROM: Kerry Kellogg, Recreation Specialist, Los Padres National Forest
Kathy Frye, Natural Areas Planner, City of Santa Barbara

SUBJECT: Trail Maintenance and Management Funding

RECOMMENDATION: That the Front Country Trails (FCT) Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force (Task Force) receive a presentation on trail maintenance and management funding alternatives.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this staff report is to provide examples of different approaches to trail maintenance and management funding and cooperative agreement alternatives. The discussion includes examples for the US Forest Service and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The staff report also outlines a local cooperative agreement and FCT options.

Trail Maintenance and Management Funding

US Forest Service

Since the beginning of the Task Force process, the U.S. Forest Service (Forest) has attempted to display the value placed upon volunteers and volunteer organization necessary to accomplish a variety of trail related actions and projects. Volunteers have evolved over the last 10 years becoming the primary work force to accomplish this work. The primary vehicle to authorize volunteer trail work is a Volunteer Agreement.

The Forest Service uses two standard documents to foster a variety of volunteer programs. These two documents include the Individual Voluntary Agreement (FS 1800-7), and the Sponsored Voluntary Agreement (FS-1800-8). Both documents require the approval and signature of a Forest Line Officer, typically the District Ranger, to initiate a project. The scope, length, and type of projects are left to the discretion of the

approving official. Attachment A includes an example Sponsored Volunteer Agreement with the LPFA.

Over the years, Memorandum of Understandings/Agreements (MOU/MOA), Participating Agreements, and Volunteer Agreements have been the mainstay for accomplishing Forest Service projects. The 2006 Volunteer Accomplishment Report shows that the Santa Barbara Ranger District received 11,220 hours of volunteer support valued at over \$200,000.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (NRA)

According to staff, the National Park Service (NPS) has a paid trails crew, consisting of a Supervisor and three full-time and two part-time employees. NPS trails staff works Monday through Friday and performs skilled trails work, such as the building of rock walls and culverts. California State Parks, within the NRA, has one Supervisory trails staff member.

NRA volunteer trail crews generally work on weekends, under the supervision of a trained volunteer crew leader. The work they perform is usually not as technical or skilled as that of NRA staff. Santa Monica Mountains Trail Conservancy, a major NRA volunteer group discussed in Agenda Item 3, provides many volunteer hours to State Parks, due to their limited personnel. The NPS has approximately 300 regular volunteers that work at least once a week (versus one-time volunteers). Collectively, NRA volunteers provide 50,000 hours of volunteer service per year.

Memorandum of Understanding and Other Partnership Agreements

US Forest Service

There are three primary agreements used nationally by the Forest Service as the principle vehicles for establishing partnerships between agencies, organizations and local groups: a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA); and a Participating Agreement.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOU or MOA is used interchangeably by the Forest Service, and the agreement can be written a variety of ways. It can contain generic language (MOU) or with more specific language that would spell out expectations and clearly define roles (MOA). Attachment B provides an MOU template. This template represents the nationally recommended process for developing partnerships.

Participating Agreement. A Participating Agreement is utilized between cooperators when there is a need for monies to be moved in either direction between agencies. A Participating Agreement, with a Financial Plan, would tier off an existing MOU to allow for the flow of funds. Additionally, the financial plan can be modified annually by mutual consent to further define the expectations and roles and how the monies would be used. Attachment C provides a Participating Agreement and Financial Plan template.

As an example, International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) has an MOU with the Forest at a national level. Locally, the Los Padres National Forest holds a Participating Agreement with the Los Padres Forest Association (LPFA). Through this agreement, the Forest has in the past allocated funds for trail related projects. The work can be performed by the LPFA membership as volunteer projects or in some cases the LPFA serves as the project coordinator for contracted work. In return, the LPFA can accept donations on the Forest's behalf, establish fundraising events, and seek outside grant funding normally not available to the Forest Service.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (NRA)

The NPS and California State Parks signed a five-year master Memorandum of Agreement at the headquarters-level, in 1994, and negotiated annual work plans for three park clusters (adjacent NPS and State Parks lands), including the NRA. Based on the success and cost savings, an updated five-year General Agreement was signed. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy was included with NPS and the state as a full partner. According to NPS staff, all three agencies are currently in a Partnership Agreement that allows them to share resources, including people, materials and programs. The FCT September 2007 staff report provided information regarding joint NRA planning teams and the process for NRA Combined General Management Plans and General Plan updates. Through this combined effort, common policies, management strategies, and priorities are in the process of being adopted and tough NRA park controversies resolved.

Front Country Trails Consideration

The MOU and partnership between the NPS, California State Parks, and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy provides examples of successful cooperative efforts and achievements. An MOU or MOA may be an appropriate mechanism for the City, County, and Forest Service to pursue long-term trail management and maintenance objectives for the front country trails. A MOU or MOA could document the purpose, mutual benefits, and expectations of all parties. As funding becomes available, the establishment of a Participating Agreement could be initiated with the expectation of including non-government groups and local organizations.

User Fees on FCT

There are few methods for the Forest Service to charge user fees on the front country trails. Special Recreation Permits are the only fee-based use of the front country trails. Outfitter guide businesses (i.e. mountain bike tours and/or shuttles) are required to have a Forest Service special use permit to operate on the forest. However, permit fees cannot be retained by the Ranger District and must go to the Federal Treasury. Operating plans may be written to require some level of trail work or maintenance, but it is limited. There is no other Forest Service method of requiring permits for general public use that would generate funds.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. US Forest Service Sponsored Volunteer Agreement with the LPFA
- B. US Forest Service MOU template
- C. US Forest Service Participating Agreement with Financial Plan template

SUBMITTED BY: Jill E. Zachary, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director, City of Santa Barbara